REMARKS

Claims 1-10 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 4 are amended and claims 7-10 are added. No new matter is added.

Applicant appreciate the courtesies shown to Applicant's representatives by Examiner Tran in the November 30 personal interview. Applicant's separate record of the substance of the interview is incorporated into the following remarks.

I. Submission of Translated Search Report

On October 31, Applicant filed an Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) submitting two Japanese references cited in a foreign Office Action. Applicant requests the Examiner to consider these references in light of the attached English-language translation of this Office Action.

II. Pending Claims Define Patentable Subject Matter

Claims 1-6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Kuroda, U.S. Patent No. 6,804,020, in view of Nishikata, U.S. Patent No. 6,747,751. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

During the personal interview, the Examiner agreed that Kuroda does not disclose a control unit for performing a second control of sending back, to a cooperative processing apparatus which has sent the cooperation information, a processing result indicating whether the service processing unit has performed the service normally or abnormally, as recited in independent claims 1 and 4.

Kuroda teaches that, when there is a connection request, at steps S702 and S703, negotiations are entered into to determine whether cooperation is possible or not based on the pieces of information. Kuroda further teaches that when cooperation is not possible, the apparatus instructed to conduct cooperation is given a notice to that effect, together with set values leading to impossibility of cooperation and values acceptable for setting for

cooperation (step S711), and the processing comes to an end after disconnection (step S704) (Col. 10, line 53-Col. 11, line 3; and Figure 9). Thus, Kuroda does not disclose a control unit for performing a second control of sending <u>a processing result</u> indicating whether the service processing unit <u>has performed</u> the service normally or abnormally, because Kuroda merely <u>makes a determination whether or not cooperation is possible</u> and the determination is made before the external device performs the process.

During the interview and in the Office Action, the Examiner acknowledges that Kuroda fails to teach that "the sending and receiving unit sends a copy of the cooperation information to a substitute cooperative processing apparatus capable of performing a substitute service for the next service" (when an abnormality occurs in the next cooperative processing apparatus after the next cooperative apparatus has received the cooperation information) as recited in independent claims 1 and 4 (Page 4).

During the personal interview, the Examiner further agreed that Nishikata fails to overcome the deficiencies of Kuroda with respect to independent claims 1 and 4. The Office Action relies on col. 17, lines 4-53 of Nishikata for the feature of sending a copy of the cooperation information to a substitute cooperative processing apparatus capable of performing a substitute cooperative processing apparatus. However, this passage merely states that "where an abnormality in the original feed unit or the image formation unit is detected, the display unit promptly displays that the abnormality occurs. Therefore, the user can easily and clearly know such the state."

However, it is clear from other passages of Nishikata that <u>no</u> further processing takes place. For example, Nishikata teaches that if judged that the abnormality occurs, occurrence of abnormality such as jam or the like in the printer unit 2 is displayed on the panel 620 of the first operation unit 172 (110), and then the <u>process terminates</u> (Col. 14, lines 17-24). At yet another step described in Nishikata's image formation stage, an abnormality check is performed again

and if judged that the abnormality occurs, the image formation operation is interrupted (214), and the process terminates (Col. 16, lines 32-38).

According to Nishikata, whenever an abnormality has occurred, the apparatus simply displays to the user that an abnormality has occurred and the process is terminated. Nishikata is not directed to a cooperative processing apparatus or appreciative of problems faced thereby and thus fails to have the availability of a substitute cooperative processing apparatus that can perform the process. Accordingly, Nishikata fails to teach or suggest sending of a copy of the cooperation information to a substitute cooperative processing apparatus capable of performing a substitute service for the next service (when an abnormality occurs in the next cooperative processing apparatus after the next cooperative apparatus has received the cooperation information) as recited in independent claims 1 and 4 (Page 4). In fact, Nishikata is not even capable of sending the cooperation information to another apparatus as no such substitute cooperative processing apparatus exist.

Consequently Nishikata teaches away from the subject matter recited in claims 1 and 4 by terminating a process due to a detected abnormality.

This feature, shown for example, in Applicant's Figs. 8-14 can solve the problem outlined in Applicant's page 3, lines 3-9 by retaining a copy of the cooperation information at the service processing apparatus and when a task by the next cooperative processing apparatus encounters an abnormality, the retained copy of the cooperation information can be sent to a substitute cooperative processing apparatus capable of performing the next service. Thus, even when a failure or abnormality occurs, the process does not need to terminate and cooperation information is not lost where the failure occurred.

Independent claims 1 and 4 and claims dependent therefrom accordingly are patentably distinct from Kuroda, even if combined with Nishikata. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.
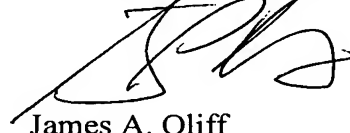
Claims 7-10 are added. These features are supported, for example, by Applicant's Figs. 5 and 7-12, page 15, line 13 to page 16, line 1, and page 16, line 17 to page 17, line 2.

Claims 7-8 depend from independent claims 1 and 4, respectively, and add that the service processing unit retains a copy of the cooperative information (which has been sent to the next cooperative processing apparatus) and the sending and receiving unit retrieves and sends the retained cooperation information to the substitute cooperative processing apparatus. Kuroda and Nishikata fail to teach or suggest this feature. Claims 9-10 depend from claims 7-8, respectively, and add that when a normal termination is received, the retained copy of the cooperation information is erased. Kuroda and Nishikata fail to teach or suggest this feature. Accordingly, claims 7-10 are allowable for their dependence on allowable base claims and for the additional features recited therein.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-10 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment:
    Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement w/Translated JP Search Report

Date: December 4, 2007

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